

BOOK REVIEW

John M. Kingsbury. 1991. *Columbus as a Botanist*. Reprinted with color illustrations from *The Cornell Plantations Quarterly*; 30 pages. Available from Bullbrier Press, 10 Snyder Heights, Ithaca, NY 14850. (Soft cover, \$2.50 plus 75 cents for delivery and handling.)

In January 1990, WGBH-TV duplicated Christopher Columbus' voyage of exploration from San Salvador to Cuba, to Haiti, and the Dominican Republic for part of an upcoming series commemorating the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World. The author of this booklet participated in that cruise aboard the *SSV Westward* to address the questions of what plants (species) Columbus sought, what he found, and what he thought he found, and to deduce from the original logged descriptions something about Columbus the man. The clues which the author scrutinizes, along with his reasoning as to what plant Columbus was describing in each instance, gives us a fascinating glance into what it meant to be having this truly "first encounter" with the native Caribbean food, fiber and medicinal plants used by the original inhabitants.

In view of the upcoming attention to be paid to this earliest of chapters in American botanical history, it can be recommended that the short time needed to read this elegant work will be well spent, both for its own sake and for the information it imparts on the importance of plants and their values in assuring the early colonization of the New World.

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